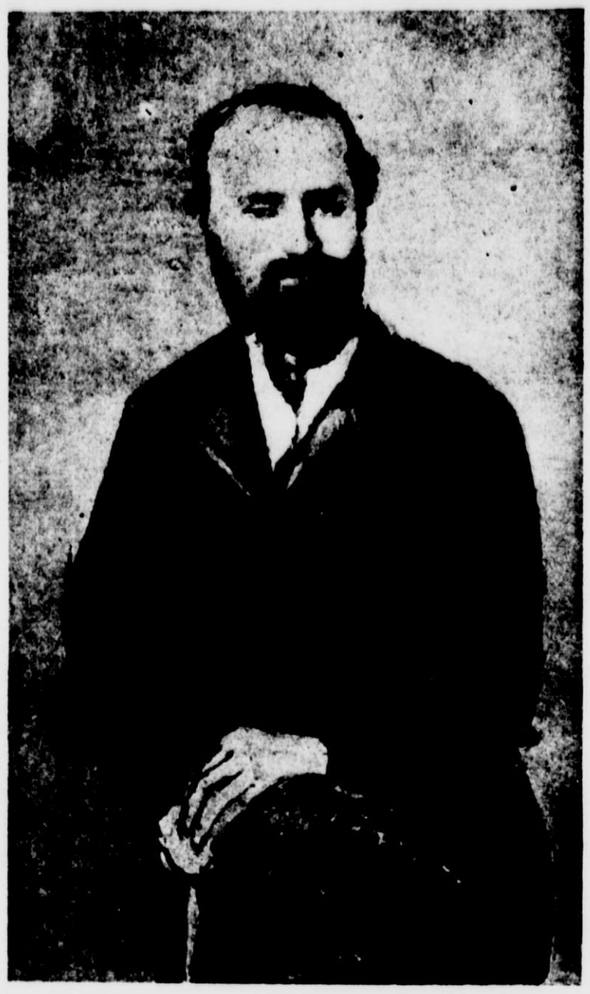
WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THE WORLD OF ART



PORTRAIT OF A MAN, BY PAUL CEZANNE.
On exhibition in the Montross Galleries.

THE Cezanne exhibition in the Montross Galleries and the French art at Knoedler's continue to excite attention, and no doubt profound results will flow from both events. The Cezanne episode is almost being turned into a religious festival by the young artists of advanced tendencies, who openly acknowledge this artist to be the fountain head of modern art. The water colors in the Montross Galleries yield them especial instances for their arguments, and promulgations in hushed but earnest tones may be heard at any hour of the day. These young people are right to emphasize the water colors, for they illustrate perfectly certain things this artist contributes to modern art; whereas the oils, although fine as examples, are not so overpoweringly convincing (with the exception of the superb portrait of a man), as certain others that might have been shown.

Conversions to the faith, however, have not been so numerous nor so spectacular as those that are numbered and assorted by the publicity agents of the Rev. Billy Sunday. It doesn't seem possible that they ever will be. Adherents to the cause of Cezanne and the new school must come from the young. In other words, you must be born "modern" to be modern.

This has always been the case with innovations and innovators. The history of the previous great art cause, impressionism, is not much taken up with distinguished conversions. The prominent, important, powerful people who opposed it went to their graves for the most part in perfect assurance that Manet and Monet were charlatans. We might console ourselves with the reflection that now that they have ascended to celestial glory they see things truly, that is to say, impressionistically; were we not too busy trying to make the prominent, important, powerful people of the present see truth from a totally different angle. The saints above, it is altogether likely, look with great leniency upon these ophthalmic sins of the flesh, so we must try to, too. The efforts of the prominent, important and powerful to stop the clock at exactly the point where they achieved their own material successes must look very amusing to them after they have quite done with earthly strife, and they look down upon each succeeding generation from the realms above and see each new set of successful old persons denying that what the new young crowd has discovered has any element of truth in it.

Life changes and so-called "truth" changes with it.

Lunching to-day with an academician I advised him to see the Montross show. "I will not," came so forcibly in reply that I saw indeed that it would be useless for him to see the pictures. He would not see in them the things he puts into his own work, and would be so outraged that he would be incapable of feeling the new thing that Cezanne does contribute. The new generation that does not share my academician's belief that art can be expressed only in an academical fashion, and seeks for something more subtle, palpitating, and nervously alive, finds it in Cezanne.

The young explain it, as I said, in hushed earnest tones. But to whom do they explain it? Only to each other.

It would be a miracle as astonishing as the conversion of St. Paul, were they to get a single feeling of theirs into the bosom of an academician. To me it is a thing impossible, therefore useless to attempt. The real thing is not to convert academicians but to proselyte among the immense number of human beings who won't go to academic shows, but who nevertheless live in the life of the present and can be interested in presentments of the emotions that they too have experienced.

The explanations that one hears offered by the young people are, however, too technical. Cezanne tried intensely to get the essence of the thing he felt to be beautiful, and although his water colors are told in but a few touches they give a sense of great completion. Every touch in them is meant. They are put in with so much certainty and power that even the spaces of white paper take on quality and meaning. Those who feel this and are enraptured by it lay too much stress upon what is after all a technical feat. To say that Cezanne is great because he makes these blank spaces vibrate, or because he interlaces forms, or notes the reaction of one color upon another, is quite as bad as Kenyon Cox's statement that Winslow Homer is great because he is a great designer. Cezanne is great because he is a great artist. This saying doesn't explain much, but, as has been said before, genius is unexplainable. It can be weighed and its effects measured, but it cannot be understood. The secret hope of the feeble is to unlock Cezanne's mystic power and to rework the vein again for self-exploitation. It's quite useless, of course. No one can be Cezanne over again. The secret of being the intense vital artist who shall stand as chief representative of an epoch does not consist in imitating some preceding chief, not even Cezanne.

There is little hope that Max Weber's "foreword" to the Cezanne catalogue will explain much to the academicians. As art appreciation it will seem to them to be as wild as the pictures. It is, however, only fair to reprint it, as it shows the way the young now talk. The modern artists will like it, and nothing derisive or derogatory that the philistines may say will affect their appreciation. Who cares what philistines say anyway? This is Max Weber's foreword:

"The rhythms, the interlaced and contrasted quantities and their energy of contour, are what he sought out in nature through these water colors.

"They are expressions of the first vtial, fresh sensations he received from closest and intense observation, and they are his freshest expressions of what one might call colored geometry sought out by him in the landscape. They serve as a most satisfying and comprehensive introduction to his complete sculpturesquely painted pictures, the areas of which are constructed with color nuances and gradations—only Cezannesque—unknown to and unequalled by any other master or school in the history of painting.

"His art is the most marvellous example of the reorganisation of the natural into a purely plastic domain. The reality of his art is so marvellous, concrete and poetic that he succeeds to a rare degree in making the static to vibrate. It is the very spiritualisation of matter form on earth. They are the first writings of a powerfully creative, placid organizing, mind controlling emotion and blazing intellect. In these water colors can be seen and felt his power of synthesis in transforming the chaotic into the purely architectural plastic.

"So intense, and often final, are these colored contours that the blank areas stir the imagination, for they are imbued with constructive color and form and are at once as satisfying as if they had been carried as far as his most complete works. So full of suggestion are these water colors that the spectator, artist or layman, must for the time being become creative. To me these water colors are complete works of art of great distinction, wholly as important as the oil pictures."

Walter Sickert writes well. He paints well, too, but his written arrows fly straight and they seem more unescapable and barbed than his painted ones. His art criticisms always contain something that is, as we Americans say, "straight off the bat." In the December *Burlington* he reviews a London exhibition of the work of the young French painter Maurice Asselin. It is amusing and true:

"Nothing throws a clearer light on modern work than a comparison of it with the ancient, just as no one can have a scholarly appreciation of the classics who is without an acute sense of the life of his day and a perception of its racy intensity.

"It has been my somewhat unpopular task to refer my contemporaries and betters incessantly back to their studies in the National Gallery. Nor is this because I think the comparisons there incurred to be invariably and in all respects to the advantage of the ancients. One of the things to which it seems to me we have a right to speak of progress is the intensity of dramatic truth it the modern 'conversation piece' or genre picture.

"Mr. Asselin's girl in 'La robe grise' is certainly cutting her nails with more convincing action than Hogarth's figures are doing what they are supposed to be doing. 'Close your primer, my son, and take a dish of tea with us. You will return to your studies with greater zest for the interlude,' is clearly what Hogarth wishes his fine gentleman in the conversation piece to be saying. But he says it in a stagey and unnatural manner. The same would apply to the gestures in a Longhi.

"Mr. Asselin's little girl is cutting her nails with the intensity and concentration of a monkey, and to that extent something essential has been torn out of life and put before us. And it is doubtful whether the more elaborate realization of details of costume in the pictures can be weighed in the scale against this heightened intensity of life. This, then, this added dramatic profundity, is one of the things that the moderns have added unto us in the course of a century."

The great moral lesson that emanates from the French art in the Knoedler Galleries applies directly to our older men, who are usually meant when the term "academicians" is used, even though they be not actually members of that body. The Cezannes are for the young who are warned that to be great one must be earnest and not copyists; the works by La Touche, Carriere, Simon and Besnard are for American academicians who are not doing their jobs with the thoroughness of these Frenchmen.

The Simon, Besnard and La Touche pictures are by no means great or epoch making (oceans of literature will not be piled up for or against them, as in the case of Cezanne), but pictures by La Touche in particular ought to bring blushes to our academicians' cheeks, for they forcibly recall the days when our artists used to try something besides landscapes and portraits. La Touche's "Merry Night" is distinctly a "Salon piece," although already diminished from the gigantic sizes that Rochegrosse finally brought into public disfavor. It is large for a drawing room certainly, but there are other places than drawing rooms for big pictures, and its size is not really against it. It has the usually good color of this artist; the summer night outdoor dinner is always a pleasant topic, and he has disposed it with skill.

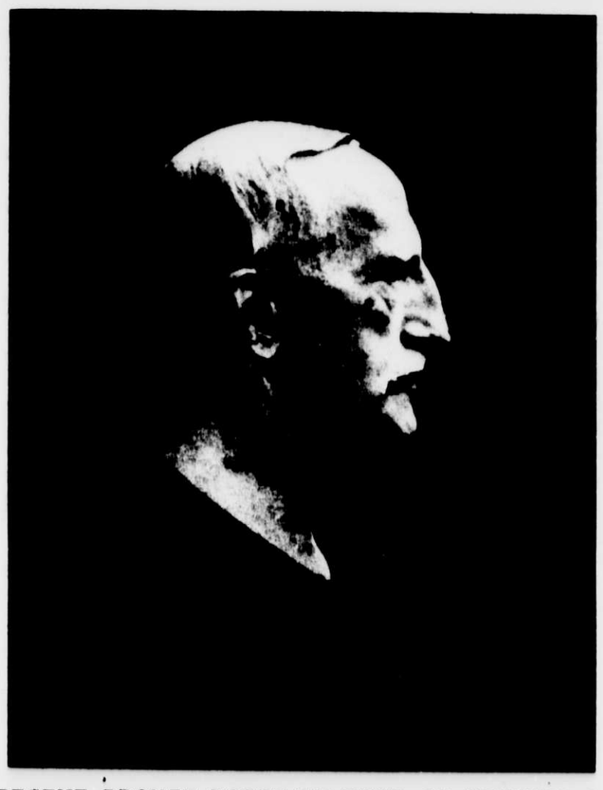
More important men than La Touche, however, dominate the show. The "Music Lesson," by Manet, is familiar to everybody and will be seen with pleasure. It has all the familiar directness of painting and illustrates Manet's ability to give haunting impression to his figures. One imagines that Manet never painted any one or anything unless that person or thing interested him intensely. Manet was independently rich, as is well known; but many artists have independence, yet allow themselves to be led into painting certain things because their connections wish it. Manet was a free man and his art was free. His people all loom large to us now, as symbolic figures in a period that had pictorial charm. The "Music Lesson" is among his very good ones. It would look very well in our Metropolitan Museum.

For pure mastery of medium, however, Manet's pastel portrait of Marie Colombier in the same exhibition excels it. The roughness, the uncouthness that mark Manet's oils, and raised such violent rows in the long ago are still visible to observers, but no one of intelligence could possibly dream of objecting to it now, and on the contrary most of us are very fond of it as part of the Manet downrightness. But in the pastel there is none of it. There must be a god who especially supervises pastels, and the period of Manet and Degas must have been propitious for him. Certainly to choose favorites among the long list of marvellous pastels that both these men produced is difficult. The head of Marie Colombier in the present show, however, would be a candidate. It has been so easily accomplished (apparently) that it appears to have been "wished" upon the paper. Nevertheless it is highly racial, highly French.

"ICE ON THE WATER PITCHER," BY HENRY SALEM H UBBELL.
In the Eclectic exhibition in the Folsom Galleries.

"THE ACTOR," BY WILHELM LIEBL.
In the Hugo Reisinger collection, to be sold by the American Art Association.

"PIETA," BY VAN DER WEYDEN.
In Andrews-Canfield sale at the American Art Association.



RECENT BRONZE PORTRAIT BUST OF EDWARD G. KENNEDY, BY JOHN FLANAGAN.